

REMARKS

The Examiner has allowed claims 61 – 80.

The Examiner has rejected a number of claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,104,701 issued to Avargues that describes a method and system for performing a least cost routing function for data communications between end users in a multi-network environment. The Examiner relied upon a brief description of a wildcard optimization algorithm at column 10, lines 31 – 62 that has been described in detail in earlier responses to the Examiner. As stated in the current Office Action mailed January 28, 2004, the Examiner still believes that “the optimizing only includes the given range of numbers” at page 3 first paragraph. However, it is respectfully submitted that this belief is directly contradicted by Avargues at column 10 lines 21 – 25,

“At some point in time, **an interval may not be contained in the original range (exceeding the highest value or being below the lowest)**, the algorithm goes back to the level of the previous digit and computes the list of wildcards representing subintervals contained in the range.” (emphasis added)

Therefore, Avargues uses a trial and error approach that, as described above, by requiring that the algorithm go back the level of the previous digit when the interval is not contained in the original range, is inefficient in both time and computing resources.

In contrast, the invention as recited in claims 4 and 38 **strictly limits the optimization operations to only those numbers included in the given range of numbers and no more** which is in direct contrast to the methodology of Avargues, which requires checking numbers outside of the original range. In this way, the method of optimization provided by claims 4 and 38 does not require the operations of going back to the level of the previous digit as required by Avargues. Therefore, the Applicant believes that claims 4 and 38 are allowable over the cited art.

Independent claims 49 and 54 recite substantially the same limitations as claim 38 and are therefore also allowable over the cited reference for at least the reasons stated for claim 38.

Accordingly, Applicant believes that all pending claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance for this application from the Examiner. If after reviewing this amendment, this case is not considered to be in condition for allowance for any reason, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Francis Montgomery".

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